

THE UNITED ENGLISH SHEPHERD ASSOCIATION WORKING INSTINCT TEST (WIT)

Working or herding instinct refers to a dog's natural interest in herding livestock and to the dog's natural ability and approach to moving stock. This includes a number of inherent behavioral traits that allow a dog to effectively control and work stock. Behaviors that a dog naturally engages in while working stock can be thought of as being part of that dog's herding instinct. This includes gathering, heading, heeling, eyeing, balancing, wearing, pacing, and flanking. Many of these behaviors and abilities are not apparent on initial exposure to livestock. A herding instinct test is one method for systematically exposing a novice or more experienced dog to new livestock and evaluating that dog's response to those animals. For those considering herding training, a Working Instinct Test is a good place to start.

A Working Instinct Test (WIT) is not a competition, but rather a way to observe the natural herding instinct and abilities of our herding dogs. The test is conducted in a setting where the dog's ability to succeed in herding livestock is maximized. This setting provides constructive and easily attainable goals that allow the dog to show *and develop* his/her instinct and abilities. The results of the test provide the owner with information about the dog's natural herding traits, and provides *one* indicator of the dog's potential to learn the skills required for stock work.

Testers are licensed herding judges with years of herding experience.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A TEST

The test consists of two sessions, and is performed in a small area or round-pen ranging in size from 50ft x 50ft to 80ft x 80ft. Livestock used in tests will be accustomed to being worked by dogs. The number of animals used in the test will range from 3 to 5. Sheep or goats are typically used, although ducks or geese may also be available. The tester may choose to take the dog into the pen on a leash, or use a long line, in order to assess the dog's initial response to stock. If the dog is responding well, the tester may remove or drop the lead or line. Either the tester or the owner may handle the dog.

After the each test session, the tester fills out the evaluation or test form, marking characteristics and traits exhibited by the dog. The tester spends a few minutes with the owner, discussing the behavior and traits shown by the dog.

WHAT A TESTER LOOKS FOR IN THE DOG'S PERFORMANCE

Ideally, the dog will quickly show strong interest, attempting to keep the stock grouped and trying to control the movement of the stock relative to the position of the handler. Testers will evaluate boldness, self-control, and aggression, as well as the natural working distance the dog prefers (the distance between the dog and the stock). Testers recognize that a dog's initial exposure to stock may include many variations in performance, including less-than-ideal reactions that are often reflective of a dog's inexperience or lack of maturity. Inexperience with stock is one reason that the working instinct test requires two evaluations of each dog: Dogs have a better opportunity to show their natural instinct and also have more than one exposure to stock.

ELIGIBILITY

- The program is open to all English Shepherds; dogs registered with UKC will receive a discounted entry fee.
- Dogs need to be at least 6 months of age or older.
- Dogs may be intact, or spayed/neutered.
- Bitches in heat may participate, but will run last.
- Entries are generally limited to 10-12 dogs.
UESA members have priority for entry.

STEPS FOR HOSTING A WORKING INSTINCT TEST (WIT)

- UESA's Events Committee is in charge of processing and recording results and issuing certificates.
- UESA members can request that a WIT be held in their area. The request must be in writing and submitted to the Events Committee at least 60 days prior to the date of the proposed event.
Regional tests are encouraged to allow English Shepherd owners across the country to have opportunities to test their dogs. Tests may be held in conjunction with an English Shepherd gathering.

FORMS AND PROCEDURES

- Forms can be obtained from the Events Committee.
- Completed test forms need to be signed by the tester and returned to the Events Committee within 10 business days.
- Expenses must be catalogued, and receipts clipped to the Expense Form.
- Reimbursement requests may be made by completing and signing the Reimbursement Request Form and submitting that form with original receipts for all reimbursable expenses. We recommend keeping a copy of the Reimbursement Request Form and all receipts.
- Completed forms and receipts should be sent to the Events Committee
- Funds collected from entries must be sent to the Treasurer within 10 business days of the event. Results of tests will be included in the English Shepherd Journal.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTS

- Tests will be held in a clinic setting where the tester can discuss herding, herding instinct, training methods, and answer questions.
- Each dog will be tested twice over one or two days. The best score of the two tests will be used for the final rating.
- The tester or owner can handle the dog in either round of the test.
- The tester should provide feedback after each test.
- Allowable livestock are: Sheep, goats, ducks, geese, and turkeys.
- There must be a minimum of one stock animal available for each dog entered in the test. We suggest having 2 or 3 reserve animals available in case of injury or uncooperative stock.
- Each test will last no more than 10 minutes.
- Dogs may wear a flat-buckled or snap-type collar.
- A stock handler must be assigned. The stock handler will be in charge of livestock, including assessing their health and stress levels and removing animals from tests for their safety.
- A tester's assistant must be assigned prior to the event.
- The tester must be an AHBA, ASCA or AKC herding judge in good standing, and approved by the Events Committee.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

After each performance the tester will use the rating form to record the characteristics and traits observed during the dog's performance. The tester may also make comments on the bottom of the form. Note that the tester is observing each dog's performance on that day at that specific time. With continued exposure, experience, and training, a dog can develop instincts, skills and abilities that may not be apparent during their first exposure to stock

In addition to noting the dog's individual working traits, the tester will rate the dog's overall performance using the WIT rating form (below). If a dog receives an NR (Not Rated) this does not mean that the dog does not have instinct. It simply means the dog may not have exhibited its instinct at the time of this test. Common reasons that dogs may receive an NR are as follows: Young age, inexperience, or discomfort with the setting, the tester, or with the stock. Dogs that receive an NR rating are encouraged to retake the test at a later date. Like people, every dog develops at his/her own rate. Some dogs will show instinct as young puppies; others begin to show instinct at two to three years of age.

A Working Instinct Testing (WIT) certificate will be issued to those dogs that receive an A, B or C rating. Test results will be recorded and reported in the English Shepherd Journal. Certificate title abbreviations (see below) can be added to the dog's name following the test (e.g., Bob's Jack WIT-A). This shows the dog has working/herding instinct and passed the WIT test with a rating of •A• for excellent.

United English Shepherd Association
Working Instinct Test Form

PERFORMANCE RATING

A - Excellent
B - Good
C - Fair
NR - Not Rated

TITLE ABBREVIATIONS:

Excellent: WIT-A
Good: WIT-B
Fair: WIT-C
Not Rated: NR

Date of Test: _____ Location: _____

Dog's information

Name of Dog: _____ Call Name: _____
Age: _____ Sex: _____ Color: _____ Spayed/ Neutered
Registered with: (circle all that apply) UKC, ESC, IESR, ARF, Rescue, Not registered
Sire: _____ Dam: _____ if known
Breeder: _____ Stock experience: (circle one) Lots, some, little, none

Owner information

Name: _____ Phone: _____ email: _____
Address: _____

Circle one: UESA member/ Non-UESA member

Characteristics & Traits

Style

gathering
 driving
 gathering & some driving
 driving & some gathering
 no clear preference

Bark

works silently
 force barks
 some barking
 sustained barking

Power

sufficient for stock
 forceful, appropriate
 excessive force
 lacks power to move stock at this time

Approach

runs wide
 runs moderately wide
 runs close

Temperament

readily adjusts
 a little distracted
 easily distracted
 apprehensive

Responsiveness

responsive to guidance
 somewhat responsive
 unresponsive

Eye

loose
 medium
 strong

Interest

sustained interest
 keen interest
 some interest
 no interest

Grouping of Stock

keeps stock grouped & regroups
 does not regroup
 singles out individuals/splits
 chases stock
 loses contact with stock

Wearing

wears readily
 wears a little
 no wearing

Balancing Stock to Handler

adjusts position
 some adjustment
 no adjustment

Overall Performance Rating (please circle):

A – Excellent

B – Good

C – Fair,

NR – Not Rated

Comments:

Tester's signature _____ Date _____